

Cover Sheet – Social Service Activity

Original

AGENCY NAME: Center For Human Development/Family Outreach of Amherst

AGENCY ADDRESS: 401 Main Street Suite 12 Amherst, MA 01002

AGENCY PHONE NO: 413-548-1270

CONTACT PERSON EMAIL: lreichsman@chd.org

2012 CDBG REQUEST: \$30,000

RECEIVED SEP 18 2012

1. Project name

Family Outreach of Amherst Emergency Funds Resource Caseworker

2. Project Description

A full time caseworker will provide case management, advocacy, information and referral, and life skills coaching to struggling Amherst families and individuals in danger of homelessness and/or utility termination.

3. Project Location

Amherst, MA

4. Budget request

\$30,000 to respond to families and individuals living in Amherst who are in danger of becoming homeless and/or having their utilities shut off.

5. Type of Activity (check one)

☐ Homelessness and sheltering

☐ Youth Development and afterschool care

☐ Adult education and job training

☒ Emergency and prevention services: emergency rental assistance, emergency fuel assistance, emergency food and emergency shelter services that can include case management and coordination.

☐ Other- Please explain

6. Demonstrate consistency with Community Development Strategy

Family Outreach of Amherst's proposal is consistent with the Community Development Strategy as it provides services to families and individuals in Amherst who are at risk of, or have become homeless, and/or their utilities are in danger of being terminated. In addition, FOA works effectively with struggling families to help them learn life skills that interrupt the cycle of crisis that keeps them from having successful, stable lives.

7. Describe how you will ensure that participants meet low/moderate income requirements

Participants will fill out an income information form.

8. National Objective

Benefit to low- income and moderate-income persons-

Families and individuals will receive services to prevent them from becoming homeless and/or have their utilities terminated. In addition, they will receive support and counseling to gain the skills needed to ensure that they are not at risk of homelessness or utility termination again.

Estimate the number of low-income and moderate-income persons to benefit from the project

250

Total number of individuals served: 250

Total Low/Mod number of individuals served: 250

A. Project description

Family Outreach of Amherst (FOA), a program of the Center for Human Development, provides case management, advocacy, information and referral, and life skills coaching to struggling families living in poverty in Amherst. For residents of Amherst, FOA is an on-going resource. We often begin working with a family when they are in crisis. After the crisis is resolved, we begin to explore with the family strategies to improve their lives in a more fundamental way.

FOA caseworkers work with 35 Amherst families a week on an on-going basis. In addition, last year we received approximately 780 calls from Amherst residents seeking assistance in areas such as housing, budgeting, and parenting. Two hundred forty-eight of these calls were from individuals and families in Amherst asking about Town of Amherst Emergency Funds. All these families and individuals were successfully supported according to their needs by the FOA Emergency Funds Resource caseworker. This is a position that cannot be funded in the current year, despite desperate need.

The Town of Amherst's Emergency Fund is an essential resource for struggling Amherst families such as those who call us. For example, one family was on the verge of entering a shelter and losing their Section 8 voucher, but due to quick mobilization in securing funds as well as help accessing supports like cash assistance and food stamps, the family was able to move into a new apartment and *circumvent the shelter system entirely*. This is a perfect example of the support of the FOA Emergency Funds Resource caseworker ensuring that a family is stabilized. If the family had simply applied for Town of Amherst emergency funds without the additional advocacy from the FOA caseworker, they most likely would have become homeless. Because the FOA caseworker was able to help them access the additional funds and resources needed to stabilize their housing crisis, this family is in their own home today.

However, 219 of the 248 calls we received were *not* eligible for the Town funds because they had not located suitable housing or did not have the financial means to sustain a new tenancy. Many had substantial rental arrears. The FOA Emergency Funds Resource caseworker worked with these families to advocate realistic payment plans with landlords, thus stabilizing their housing. Some of these 219 callers also came to FOA in danger of a utility shut-off, needing a fuel delivery, or asking for advocacy and support with substantial arrears on a utility bill. *For families with a housing subsidy, termination of utility service results in eviction proceedings*. The FOA Emergency Funds Resource caseworker helped clients

- negotiate payment plans with utility companies,
- access utility arrearage management programs,

- apply for fuel assistance,
- put in place a winter protection plan on their utility accounts to ensure shut-off prevention.

Thus, the efforts of the FOA Emergency Funds Resource caseworker were successful in aiding clients with their emergency utility needs, most notably with ensuring that utilities were not terminated and thereby avoiding homelessness for these families.

In addition, the FOA Emergency Funds Resource caseworker provided the following action and support strategies with these clients:

- help accessing emergency shelter assistance through the Department of Transitional Assistance
- help applying for emergency housing through local and regional housing authorities and place-based subsidized housing in Hampshire County
- help accessing and implementing supports and interventions to better equip them to afford and sustain future tenancies.

All applicants (whether or not they qualified for Town of Amherst emergency funds) were able to meet with the FOA Emergency Funds Resource caseworker not only to come up with a plan of action to resolve their imminent crisis, but also to examine bigger-picture issues that were more chronic in nature. Many faced chronic issues like unemployment, substance abuse, mental health challenges, inability to manage finances, as well as severe debt. The FOA Emergency Funds Resource caseworker provided case management, advocacy, and life skills coaching to help these families and individuals access supports to address these chronic problems as well as providing referrals to other agencies for more specialized assistance.

In summary, of the 248 struggling Amherst families and individuals who called FOA this past year, 29 received Town of Amherst funds, and 219 were assisted using a wide variety of advocacy and support techniques to circumvent homelessness.

This coming year, FOA has very little funding to support these families and individuals, and will not have an Emergency Funds Resource caseworker. Instead, FOA will provide these families and individuals with an application for Town of Amherst emergency funds, along with the phone numbers of other funding sources. But FOA will simply not have the funds to help those who could, with some support, access what they need to qualify for the Town Emergency Funds assistance, nor will FOA be able to provide the advocacy and support work needed to truly stabilize many of these families. The next year looks grim for struggling families in Amherst.

We are asking the CDBG committee to recommend funding for the FOA Emergency Funds Resource caseworker position so that when Amherst families and individuals are in crisis, we are able to respond and ensure that they don't become homeless.

B. Community's need

With Welfare Reform now in its 16th year, Family Outreach of Amherst has seen a marked shift in the ways our most vulnerable families survive. Once able to receive assistance from the now defunct Aid to Families with Dependant Children (AFDC) indefinitely, families now have harsh time limits and no financial support for a child born while the family receives assistance from its replacement, Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF). Initially seen as a way to get families off Welfare and into the workforce, the reality is that with a country in a significant economic downturn, Welfare Reform has made our poorest citizens even poorer. As the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports, "Over the past 16 years, the national TANF caseload has declined by 60 percent and deep poverty has worsened." (*The Nation*, 9/6/12). For the families who call us for assistance, this means if anything goes wrong for them financially, a car breaking down that they are dependant on to get to work, a sick family member without health insurance, or a sudden loss of a job, they are in immediate danger of eviction, utility shut-off, and homelessness. Quick intervention and support to stabilize a family in crisis is imperative, and FOA's ability to provide this has been severely impacted.

According to the 2000 census posted on the Town of Amherst website, 29.9% of female householders with children under 18 lived below the poverty line. This number jumps to 49.7% if the household has children less than 5 years of age. While these statistics are 12 years old, the national average for the same demographics is 34% from the national census of 2010, so we believe these statistics are accurate. Coupled with our data from the past year of calls for assistance from Amherst families (248), we believe the need for a caseworker to support struggling families in Amherst to ensure they do not become homeless is significant.

C. Community involvement

A recent referral highlights the need for a caseworker position that goes beyond giving a caller in crisis an application for Town of Amherst emergency funds. Anna (all names have been changed) brought her four-year-old son to his pediatrician with an earache. While the doctor was examining Anna's son, Sam, she noticed that Anna was very agitated and was having a hard time concentrating. Once the doctor had finished the examination, she asked Anna if there

was something troubling her. Anna burst into tears. She had just been served an eviction notice and her electricity was about to be turned off. The physician became concerned, noting that Anna had problems in her life that kept her from concentrating on her sick child. She recognized that without some intervention, Anna's problems would worsen, as would the health of her child. Since Anna lived in Amherst, the doctor was able to help: she told Anna to call Family Outreach of Amherst.

When Anna called FOA she told the caseworker about two specific problems: the eviction notice and the utility shut-off notice. During the intake with the caseworker, Anna identified other problems: an abusive boyfriend, a seriously ill mother, and mental health issues related to childhood abuse she had suffered. The FOA caseworker was immediately able to help Anna access Town of Amherst emergency funds so that she was not evicted and helped her work out a payment plan with the utility company so that her service was not interrupted.

In addition, Anna and the caseworker identified services that would help Anna's family. The caseworker helped Anna call local domestic violence support organizations and find out what services they offered. After exploring different options, Anna decided to attend a support group for women experiencing domestic violence. Anna and the caseworker role-played calling a local Hospice organization to request services for her mother. The caseworker offered to help Anna make the call but when Anna arrived for their appointment the next day, Anna proudly announced she had called on her own and secured services for her mother. In addition, the caseworker and Anna researched area mental health clinics and Anna called and made an appointment to begin therapy. Anna also identified that she had become so scattered that she was having trouble keeping track of her bills. To ensure that she wouldn't lose track of needed documents again, Anna and the caseworker created an organization system that keeps Anna on track.

It is the belief of Family Outreach of Amherst (FOA) that no matter how difficult a family's situation is, it is important that they are seen as the "experts" in their own lives—that they are viewed as having true authority, and are ultimately the ones making decisions that will, or will not, resolve their problems. Often when a family is working with an agency and seeking help, the agency caseworker will be seen as the family's "manager" with the caseworker's agenda being followed as the family receives help. We believe that if the family is not allowed to have and retain ownership of how a problem is resolved, the present issue might indeed be resolved, but the underlying issues will not be addressed.

FOA caseworkers provide life skills training by coaching families and individuals as they resolve the issues that they struggle with. Caseworkers encourage families and individuals to call their landlord and negotiate a payment plan for their overdue rent themselves instead of relying on the caseworker to make the call. Homework is often given to families to research their options resolving whatever issue they are facing. The caseworker then meets with the family and problem solves with them on the best course of action based on the research done by the family. An organizational binder is created with the family so that all important documents are readily available. There are various components of the binder, and the family is encouraged to "build" their binder to suit their specific family's need. Each step of the way the goal is to not only stabilize the family in their immediate crisis, but to give them the tools needed to avoid further crises.

D. Project feasibility

FOA receives approximately 15 new calls a week from individuals in the community seeking help with housing issues, utility shut-off assistance, parenting support, budgeting help, and access to mental and physical health services. These families have been referred from a host of sources such as the local schools, doctors and neighbors. FOA is well known in the community and its services are well utilized.

FOA has been providing intensive outreach and support services for over twenty years. At its core is community-based, intensive case management and life skills coaching for families in need of substantial supports and services. FOA has earned a reputation throughout the community as a program that can be relied on to serve effectively those families facing the greatest challenges with the fewest resources. FOA provides high quality information, referral, and advocacy services for hundreds of families each year, helping them find and secure the resources they need and are eligible for. With a smaller number of families, FOA provides intensive parent support to address acute situations that threaten the stability of the family and can put children in jeopardy. FOA can be depended upon to work with these families in a calm, respectful, and effective manner.

E. Impact

Of the 248 calls FOA received this past year from families seeking assistance in stabilizing their housing and preventing a utility shut off, 195 calls were for housing issues and 125 were for utility termination issues. The impact of helping these individuals and families to avoid homelessness is best illustrated by two case studies.

One individual whom FOA assisted had been struggling with homelessness for the past two years, staying on the couches of

different family and friends. Disabled and on a fixed income, he was able to secure a voucher for subsidized housing and reached out to Family Outreach of Amherst to access support securing stable housing. Working with a FOA caseworker, the client was able to access funding through the Town Fund as well as three other funding sources to help pay for move-in expenses. Additionally, the caseworker helped the individual access supports like food stamps, budgeting, fuel assistance, and credit counseling & debt management services. Because of the support he received from FOA, the emergency funds through the Town Funds, and other interventions and supports, the client was able to move into his own apartment.

In another case, a FOA caseworker assisted a mother and her teenage son who were on the brink of homelessness. The mother had chronic substance abuse and mental health issues. She had fled an extremely abusive relationship and had numerous medical issues because of the abuse. Her son, struggling to finish high school also had mental health issues due to untreated Post Traumatic Stress from years of witnessing his mother's abuse. When FOA began working with the family they were in the process of being evicted for non-payment of rent. The FOA caseworker helped the mother access Town of Amherst emergency funds to stop the eviction proceedings. Because the family had a subsidy they were bound by regulations to keep their apartment in a relatively clean state. Because of their mental health issues and mom's substance abuse issues, the conditions of their apartment had become unacceptable to the housing authority. They were soon in danger of losing their housing again. The FOA caseworker helped them access support through the Tenant Preservation Program who helped them clean up their apartment and save their tenancy. The caseworker then worked with the mother to access substance abuse services and helped her find a program that would help her get sober and address her mental health issues. The son also started therapy and the caseworker assisted him in accessing more support at school and finding a job. Today the family is stabilized and doing well.

This mother and son and the individual described above represent just 2 of the 248 calls whose lives who were impacted by our services in the past year. Many more families have been assisted, and continue to be supported by FOA.

F. Evaluation

FOA evaluates each participant's progress on a quarterly basis. At the beginning of each quarter, the FOA caseworker and the client identify the goals the client is interested in achieving over the next three months. At the end of the quarter, they rank the achievement rate of these goals with the following options: no change, 50% goal

reached, 75% goal reached, or 100% goal reached. This method gives both the client and the caseworker an on-going evaluation tool to identify the strategies that are working well for the client. It also allows the caseworker and client to continuously and effectively address areas in which the client can become "stuck", ensuring the potential for on-going growth and improvement in the client's life.

G. Agency information

For over twenty years, FOA has consistently been responsive to the needs of struggling Amherst families, through our case management and advocacy programs and our special programs such as the Amherst Juvenile Court Diversion Program, The Learning for Life literacy project, the Voices for Change women's empowerment project, the Domestic Violence Response Project, the Women's Resource Empowerment Network group, our young adult On Track program, and our Echo Village homework club. All these projects have one common theme: they were all implemented in response to a stated need from both Town officials and community members alike. In addition, FOA has consistently worked closely with the Amherst Police Department, the public schools, the Department of Children and Families, and other community agencies to provide the best services possible to Amherst's most fragile citizens.

FOA is a program of the Center for Human Development which provides advocacy, empowerment, independence and community integration while confronting the most critical problems faced by children, families and adults in our region. CHD is a leader in community initiatives and works collaboratively and in partnership with other agencies/community based resources to provide the best services and participate in the creation and maintenance of effective and responsive community systems.

FAMILY OUTREACH OF AMHERST	
CDBG GRANT - TOWN OF AMHERST	
PERSONNEL	
CASEWORKER	24,960
PROGRAM SUPERVISOR	875
SUB-TOTAL SALARIES	25,835
PAYROLL TAX	
F.I.C.A.	1,975
UNIVERSAL HEALTH INSURANCE TAX	69
UNEMPLOYMENT TAX	258
WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION	284
SUB-TOTAL PAYROLL TAX	2,586
FRINGE BENEFITS	
LIFE INSURANCE	45
DISABILITY INSURANCE	219
HEALTH INSURANCE	4,244
DENTAL INSURANCE	253
PENSION	26
SUB-TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS	4,787
TOTAL PERSONNEL COSTS	33,208
<u>STAFF MILEAGE/TRAVEL NON CLIENT</u>	
STAFF MILEAGE	328
Subtotal Staff Mileage	328
<u>PROG. SUPPLIES, MAT. & EXP. ITEMS</u>	
CLOTHING	0
MEDICINE/PHARMACY	0
MISCELLANEOUS CLIENT EXP.	300
RECREATION	0
Youth Incentive Program	0
SUPPLIES EDUCATIONAL	0
SUPPLIES EDUCATIONAL/CLINICAL	0
SUPPLIES/PROGRAM	200
Subtotal Program Supplies	500

<u>PROGRAM SUPPORT</u>	
INS PROFESSIONAL	261
SUPPLIES/OFFICE	25
TELEPHONE MOBILE	503
TELEPHONE OFFICE	
TELEPHONE SITE	
Subtotal Program Support	788
SUB-TOTAL OTHER DIRECT COSTS	1,616
TOTAL DIRECT COST	34,825
INDIRECT COST **	4,173
TOTAL EXPENSES	38,998
INCOME	
CDBG	30,000
Fundraising	8,998
TOTAL PROGRAM INCOME	38,998

THE AMHERST, PELHAM & AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Serving Amherst, Pelham and the Amherst-Pelham Region

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
170 CHESTNUT STREET
AMHERST, MA 01002

413-362-1810 (PHONE)
413-549-6108 (FAX)

September 17, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to endorse the Community Development Block Grant proposals submitted by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County and Family Outreach of Amherst. Both of these organizations provide essential services that support the most vulnerable of our districts' students, helping to mitigate factors that would otherwise impede their ability to achieve at their highest level.

The consistent, reliable friendship provided through a Big Brothers Big Sisters mentor/mentee relationship is invaluable. For students from families with multiple risk factors, it can be the positive factor that allows them to reach full potential—both as students and as productive, contributing members of their community. If you approve the grant request of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County, it will allow an additional 25 students to be matched with an adult or college student mentor for a full year.

For many families, the everyday reality of living in, or on the edge, of poverty is a major barrier to the ultimate achievement of their children, as well as to the overall well-being of the family. Family Outreach of Amherst is seeking funds to hire a caseworker to work directly with families who are on the brink of homelessness or utility termination. The impact of such circumstances on a child's ability to be successful in school—academically, socially and emotionally—cannot be overestimated. By providing someone who will assist families in navigating their way through sometimes overwhelming situations, Family Outreach of Amherst will utilize CDBG funding in a way that will have an extremely positive effect on students.

As you review proposals for CDBG funding, I urge you to give your strongest consideration to those submitted by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County and Family Outreach of Amherst. Both will make positive and lasting impacts on the lives of many children and, ultimately, on the entire Amherst community. It is my sincere hope that you will fund both of these worthy proposals.

Sincerely,



Maria Geryk
Superintendent of Schools